

Making Tracks

*A comprehensive ten year plan for managing and developing the
Hutt City Council's track network.*

*Parks and Gardens Division
April 2009*

This document was prepared by Parks and Gardens Division, following consultation from December 2008 to March 2009 and adopted by Strategy and Policy Committee on 22 April 2009

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Tracks provide opportunities for residents and visitors to our City to experience settings that are a unique part of our local landscape. Walking tracks provide many benefits for our communities, particularly health and well being, environmental education, social development and outdoor recreation. Consultation was carried out in 2008 and 2009 to produce this document. Making Tracks will guide Council's provision of tracks over the next 10 years.

1.2 Making Tracks details Council's goals and objectives, describes the existing track network and proposes new tracks. It is accompanied by a budget for works. This document has been produced in order to ensure that the track network is managed and developed strategically in order to enhance recreation opportunities for the benefit of the community. In some cases the benefits are expected to extend beyond this Council's territory. The objectives set in the 1998 review of tracks were reviewed and incorporated into this document.

Although Council adopted an option for upgrading and developing tracks at a value of approximately \$3.06m over 10 years on 22 April 2005, the majority of Making Tracks projects proposed in this document have not been funded – note added January 2014

1.3 Council is currently responsible for approximately 64 kilometres of track, with the majority of these being located in the Eastern and Western Hills of the Hutt Valley. In addition to these tracks, Greater Wellington provides fabulous walking, cycling and riding opportunities along the Hutt River Trail and in Belmont Regional Park and East Harbour Regional Park. The Department of Conservation provides a wide range of walking opportunities, including genuinely remote locations, in the Rimutaka Forest Park.

1.4 This document identifies many opportunities for upgrading tracks to comply with the requirements of the new track classification standards contained in the New Zealand Standard "Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures" SNZ HB8630:2004. The handbook is influencing the provision of tracks across New Zealand. Over time Council will narrow the gap between the quality of what is provided and the quality required by the handbook. As officers expected, this concept was challenged by fit and experienced walkers during the public consultation process who believe that track experiences could be "dumbed down" as a result of following the handbook.

1.5 Currently 42% of tracks in the network managed by Council are suited to less able users while 57% are suited to fit and capable cyclists and walkers. This document suggests that the balance should alter over ten years to a situation where two thirds of Council's tracks are suited to less able users.

1.6 In general, the tracks contained in this document are managed as recreational assets by the Parks and Gardens Division of Council. These tracks are primarily provided for leisure activities rather than active transport but are seen as dual purpose by the community.

1.7 Local contractors, specialising in track maintenance and development have contributed to the production of this document.

2. Consultation

2.1 The DRAFT version “Making Tracks” was provided to the public for consultation purposes. 62 submissions were collected and fully considered. The quality of submissions was high and detailed content gave officers good insight into local track issues plus suggestions for alterations to the Draft.

2.2 Based on the December 2008 Draft “Making Tracks” document, submitters’ comments were predominantly orientated around the following topics:

Specific track projects (such as upgrading and developing new tracks)

Mountain Bike use on Hutt City Council tracks

Altering current level of track difficulty to provide a greater level of easier tracks

Tracks not currently managed by Hutt City Council

Links and land acquisition to enhance the existing track network

Motorised recreational use of Council’s track network

Promotion of Council’s track network

2.3 The concept of Council providing a greater number of less challenging tracks was a topic that several submitters responded to passionately. Both ends of the spectrum were represented. Those wanting the current balance of track difficulty to remain approximately the same are concerned that providing a greater proportion of the track network at path and walking track levels will limit skill development and challenge sought by many track users. Those supporting the officers’ proposal to provide a greater number of tracks at easier grades generally do so out of concern for physical activity levels. The current practice of mountain bikes and walkers sharing tracks was also a topic that generated several comments from submitters. The greatest support for specific track projects was easily the Park Road Reservoir to Meadowbank track proposal along with a request for a bridge from southern Petone, over State Highway Two to lower Korokoro.

2.4 The consultation process was completed in March 2009.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The recommendations contained in the draft document and then this final version were developed on the assumption that the 1998 Walkways Review set a sturdy platform, which now needs to be reviewed and extended.
- 3.2 Council believes that “Making Tracks” will provide an appropriate and sustainable track network through effective policy. Council adopted the goals, objectives and policies set out in summarised form below on 22 April 2009.

GOAL 1 TRACK USERS

Ensure that the range of tracks provided approximately matches the experience and ability of residents and visitors.

Objective 1.1

Adopt the SNZ HB 8630:2004 track classification system, which aims to match track users’ recreation and safety needs with suitable track classifications.

POLICY 1.1.1

Walkers, Runners and Mountain Bikers are considered to be the legitimate users of Council’s track network.

POLICY 1.1.2

All new tracks and significant upgrades will be professionally designed in order to achieve tracks that match the needs of the predominant users or likely predominant and, where practical, complying with SNZ HB 8630:2004. Council will adopt a simplified version of the Handbook, using Path, Walking Track (Short Walk and Walking Track), Tramping Track (Easy Tramping Track and Tramping Track) and Route categories.

Note that this 4 category approach matches that of Greater Wellington, the Regional Council.

POLICY 1.1.3

Where practical, smaller scale works on existing tracks should comply with SNZ HB 8630:2004.

POLICY 1.1.4

Council will provide a range of track experiences, recognising that the urban location of its network will, in the long term, generally favour Urban Residents, Short Stop Travellers and Day Visitors. Council recognises walkers, runners and mountain

bikers, as legitimate recreational users of the track network and confirms that recreational motorised activity is prohibited. Pony riders are limited to the Council's firebreaks (a sub-set of the track network). An element of outdoor adventure experiences will be retained in urban areas to provide personal challenge and skill development. This will include a small range of Tramping Tracks and Routes.

POLICY 1.1.5

Council appreciates that Back Country Comfort Seekers, Back Country Adventurers and Remoteness Seekers are generally more appropriately hosted in Regional Parks or the Rimutaka Forest Park, where longer tracks and more remote locations are found. Council will not introduce additional Routes to its track network.

POLICY 1.1.6

For the purposes of assisting operational management decisions, Council will establish a method to analyse track user numbers in order to determine where upgrading and maintenance work would benefit most users.

POLICY 1.1.7

For the purposes of gauging general public opinion about Council's tracks, Council will include track questions in one of its annual NRB surveys in 2009 or 2010.

POLICY 1.1.8

In order to reduce the environmental impact of outdoor recreation in "natural settings", Council generally encourages use of tracks rather than off-track recreation.

POLICY 1.1.9

Council does not offer camping or overnight stays within its track network.

Objective 1.2

Consider Council's tracks to be facilities which offer a variety of benefits to a range of residents and visitors and give special consideration to schools, families and less physically active members of the community.

POLICY 1.1.9

Between 2008 and 2018 develop new tracks or modify existing tracks to provide 66% of all Council managed tracks (not kilometres) suited to Urban Residents, Short Stop Travellers and Day Visitors.

POLICY 1.2.2

Officers will investigate opportunities to provide appropriate tracks in less physically active areas of the City and report the findings back to Council in 2009.

POLICY 1.2.3

Council's track network is equally available to walkers and mountain bikers, with the exception of:

Rata Street Loop, walkers only	Naenae
Links to Puketiroiro Partnership land, walkers only	Korokoro
Beeline, mountain bikers only Street	Wainuiomata

If Chuck Norris (Wainuiomata, Waiu Street) is constructed, it will be specifically developed for mountain bikers.

When Te Whiti Riser is constructed, several Hayward Scenic Reserve tracks will be available to walkers only.

POLICY 1.2.4

Council's track network contributes to the active transport network, although its primary purpose is recreational walking, mountain bike and baby buggy use will be considered when planning upgrades or new tracks.

POLICY 1.2.5

There is some scope for volunteers to participate in planning, design and construction of upgrades and new tracks as well as promotion, reporting and maintenance functions. The scope will vary for each project, depending on the capability and experience of volunteers. Council's Volunteers Policy is used as a guide and volunteer contributions are negotiated with Council Asset Managers prior to work commencing. The ability to achieve a quality outcome that complies with SNZ HB 8630:2004 is a key requirement. Council being the owner/manager of reserve land is therefore responsible for managing tracks on it and able to assist with or override track matters, including promotion, events, signage, upgrading and extension.

POLICY 1.2.6

Unauthorised development of tracks on land owned or managed by Hutt City Council is undesirable and will be managed in order to ensure that any track development in the City complies with SNZ HB 8630:2004 and contributes strategically to the track network.

POLICY 1.2.7

There is some scope for commercial non-motorised use of Council's track network and each commercial proposal will be treated on a case by case basis, with Council expecting to profit in a modest way and use any income to offset general track maintenance.

POLICY 1.2.8

With the exception of Percy Scenic Reserve, Council shall allow dogs on tracks so long as they are leashed. Note that some sections of the track network run through dog exercise areas, where dogs are required to be under control but not necessarily leashed.

GOAL 2 MAINTENANCE

Ensure that track maintenance is sufficient to satisfy the requirements of track users and does not result in unreasonable deterioration of the track assets.

Objective 2.1

Rationalise the current maintenance regime in order to focus services on areas where use is highest and where users are less capable and give less attention to rugged, unpopular or more remote tracks.

POLICY 2.1.1

Review the provision of track inspection and maintenance services prior to Council's Reserves Contract Expiring with a view to improving contract specifications and contract monitoring procedures.

POLICY 2.1.2

That future contract specifications for track maintenance recognise that inspection and maintenance regimes should vary according to the nature of the tracks and their users.

POLICY 2.1.3

Council will continue to provide \$85,000 (excluding Hutt River Trail contribution and Contract for Reserves maintenance), with annual adjustments for inflation, to cover ongoing maintenance and small scale upgrade works annually.

POLICY 2.1.4

Council will continue to provide \$11,000, plus inflation adjustments, to the Combined Rotary Clubs of Hutt Valley annually to cover ongoing maintenance and low-key developments on the Hutt River Trail.

POLICY 2.1.5

Council will continue to provide funds to cover the ongoing contract costs associated with inspection and minor maintenance on tracks, currently \$29,000 annually.

POLICY 2.1.6

Volunteers participating in maintenance of Council's track network are guided by Council's Volunteers Policy and approval for work is required by a Council Asset Manager prior to volunteer activity. Note that volunteers are generally unable to use power tools.

POLICY 2.1.7

Closing tracks or replacing sections of poor track with superior sections of track is a legitimate management option.

POLICY 2.1.8

Council allows track closures as a last resort, where there is significant risk to public safety or where a superior new track generally repeats an old track, leaving the old track redundant. Outside emergency and urgent safety matters, decisions about track closures will be the responsibility of the Operations and Compliance Committee of Council.

GOAL 3 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

To provide, subject to LTCCP funding, adequate finances to ensure that HCC tracks are developed and maintained to the standards adopted by Council in "Making Tracks" and to provide for the depreciation of the asset.

Objective 3.1

New and Maintenance Capital expenditure are adequately funded in order to achieve the projects set out in the Proposed Project Priorities list, Appendix C.

POLICY 3.1.1

Maintenance and upgrading of existing tracks in Council's track network should generally be prioritised over the development of new tracks. Of secondary concern is the development of new tracks or reinstating old tracks that are outside Council's track network.

POLICY 3.1.2

Provide budget, for new and maintenance capital projects, through the LTCCP process, in line with the projects set out in the Project Priorities, Option 2.

GOAL 4 DEVELOPING THE TRACK NETWORK

To extend the track network and develop and make provision for links to present residents and visitors with more recreation opportunities in order to generate more benefits.

Objective 4.1

To consider expansion of the track network in a regional context in order to avoid repetition and to link to tracks (existing and proposed) managed by Hutt City Council and other agencies.

POLICY 4.1.1

Council will actively attempt to acquire land to extend the existing track network, giving particular focus on acquiring land that could provide useful links through the reserves contribution mechanism in the subdivision process.

POLICY 4.1.2

Council will acquire Esplanade Strips and Esplanade Reserves through the subdivision process, keeping in mind long term continuity for ecological and recreation purposes, along key waterways.

POLICY 4.1.3

Where acquisition of land is not an option and landowners are willing, Council will actively attempt to formalise access of land in order to legitimise existing tracks used by the public.

Objective 4.2

To extend the track network strategically in order to maximise benefits.

POLICY 4.2.1

Council will plan strategically to develop worthwhile track links to service new and existing urban, suburban, peri-urban and rural area. Some of this planning will occur as part of the subdivision application and approval process.

POLICY 4.2.2

Major upgrades or the development of new tracks will be scheduled in accordance with the Project Priorities, Appendix C.

POLICY 4.2.3

Council does not see its territorial boundary as the limit to the network it has an interest in and encourages inter-agency cooperation in order to extend the track network and attract users.

Objective 4.3

To limit future maintenance liabilities and damage to land, waterways, features and vegetation surrounding tracks.

POLICY 4.3.1

Seek professional design advice and use appropriately qualified and/experienced contractors to produce quality new or upgraded tracks and structures.

POLICY 4.3.2

Review the current contract requirements for track inspections and maintenance and purchase the a level of service that allows the contractor to prevent ordinary, minor track deterioration, noting that this is likely to be higher than the current annual price of \$29,000 plus gst.

POLICY 4.3.4

Track development may include park furniture, signage, bollards, decks, art work, amenity, revegetation, lookouts at strategic points, as approved by Council s Reserves Asset Manager.

GOAL 5 SPREADING THE WORD

Inform residents and visitors of Council's track network to encourage use and assist potential users to choose an appropriate track for their level of ability.

Objective 5.1

Provide accurate, professional quality track information.

POLICY 5.1.1

Use modern technology to provide accurate and informative maps of the track network and accompany this with descriptive information about the tracks (HCC and other agencies) including walking times/distance and level of difficulty.

POLICY 5.1.2

As new signs are required, provide quality, professional signage on streets and on tracks entrances to indicate times, permitted use, unpermitted use, level of difficulty and to aid navigation on Council's track network. This applies to all tracks in Council's track network but not all information is required on all signs.

POLICY 5.1.3

Unless a special reason exists, signage across the track network will be standardised and will comply with Council's signage requirements. It is appropriate for some sites to have customised signage in order to complement the character of the site.

POLICY 5.1.4

In areas where there is a cluster of linking tracks Council will provide map boards at key entrances.

Objective 5.2

Make the information about Council's track network easily accessible and free.

POLICY 5.2.1

Council will provide free printed tracks information at libraries and at the Laings Road Information Centre. Council will not necessarily promote all tracks. Promotion is limited to tracks where a regular inspection and maintenance service is provided by a suitably qualified and/or experienced representative of Council.

POLICY 5.2.2

Provide track information on Council's website so that it can easily be downloaded and printed on home computers.

POLICY 5.2.3

Encourage recreation programmers to include guided, local walks and rides tracks on their activity programmes.

POLICY 5.2.4

Investigate opportunities to provide interesting and appealing bush walking opportunities for tourists near public transport routes and promote these opportunities with accommodation providers.

POLICY 5.2.5

Identify sites where the experience of users would be enhanced by providing ecological, historical and cultural interpretation material on site.

4. Introduction

- 4.1 It is clear that our tracks add to the character and contribute to the liveability of our City and have become a subtle but valued part of the infrastructure. They warrant thorough planning and proper maintenance in order to provide the community and visitors with facilities that meet their requirements.
- 4.2 Tracks are an appealing way to offer our residents a delicious slice of active living. In 2009 we are concerned about obesity, heart disease, diabetes, sedentary lifestyles, fuel prices, the price of residential accommodation (renting and owning), families not spending enough quality time together, reduced discretionary income and people feeling isolated and lonely in their own suburb. Tracks offer a panacea to this era of expanding waistlines and lower activity levels.
- 4.3 The primary purpose of this review is to provide information about the current state of tracks, propose developments for new connections and suggest how these might be prioritised over a 10 year (plus) period. Long term requirements for various track users and maintenance implications are a key consideration in this document.
- 4.4 Tracks in this City offer visitors and residents a range of recreational opportunities in a variety of environments. Walkways take users to points where excellent views of the South Island, Tararua Ranges and the Wellington Harbour may be enjoyed. Other bush tracks take people to Tawa forests and lowland coastal forests. Every fine weekend family groups use the tracks for recreational purposes - to enjoy the bush, to access an isolated picnic site, to tire the kids out or to take in a great view of the Hutt Valley. In addition to this recreational purpose some tracks provide residents with alternative, "off street" active transport routes. In 1998 residents of Western Hills suburbs indicated that tracks were important as channels for pedestrian traffic, linking suburbs with public transport routes. 2008/09 submitters' views appear to reinforce this.
- 4.5 Like all assets, tracks need to be funded, planned, constructed and maintained properly in order to maximise benefits to users and to minimise maintenance expenses. In the past it has been difficult to get this point across. With the development of some good quality tracks recently, it is now possible to demonstrate the benefits of a quality and strategic approach. Using submitters' project suggestions and some from officers, three Project Priority funding options were developed. On 22 April 2009 the Strategy and Policy Committee of Council adopted Option 2, attached as Appendix 2.
- 4.6 Readers of this document may note deficiencies in the track information. Officers seek further information about the location of walkways, especially the older tracks that are not currently part of Council's network. Additional information about walkways will continue to be collected and recorded on plans for the third review of Council's track network (around 2018). Please feed information about tracks to the Parks and Gardens Business Unit, Hutt City Council.

- 4.7 The publication of the 1998 Walkways Review has clearly demonstrated the benefit of taking a strategic approach to track development. This contemporary document extends the 1998 work and continues to plot a way forward in order to reach a commonly agreed set of goals, objectives and policies appropriate for 2009.
- 4.8 Determining the City's track needs requires a balance of technical objectivity and well as heartfelt subjectivity. "Value for money" or "Bang for you buck" is difficult to quantify.
- 4.9 Proposals to alter items covered by these recommendations will require approval from the appropriate Committee of Council. In some cases it will also be appropriate to seek the views of the local Community Committee or Community Board. Funding for track upgrades and development will be anticipated in the Parks and Reserves Asset Management Plan and allocated through the Annual Plan process.
- 4.10 Emergency and safety matters will be handled by officers in a way that suits the situation presented. This may mean that consultation and advance notice of change is impractical.
- 4.11 Proposals to alter the funding priorities, outside of emergency works, will require approval through Council's Long Term Council Community Plan process.

5. Assumptions

5.1 Six key assumptions have been made in undertaking this Review. These are:

- 5.1.1 Tracks must be planned, developed and maintained in a way that is strategic, sustainable, enduring and affordable, with new tracks and upgrades complying with relevant standards. Well constructed tracks are more efficient and sustainable over the long term;
- 5.1.2 Tracks add value and bring benefits to the City and its residents and visitors. Tracks will be well used if they are constructed and maintained to a level that matches ability and offers users a quality experience. Quality experiences must be weighed up against the cost of construction and long term maintenance;
- 5.1.3 Existing tracks should predominantly form the base of a strategically coordinated walkways system, taking into account provision by other agencies;
- 5.1.4 Ordinary use of the tracks should continue to be free of a direct charge;
- 5.1.5 The track network in the City should offer a range of safe, but not risk free, experiences and provide for a range of abilities;
- 5.1.6 The current annual operating track budget of \$85,000 plus the \$29,000 sum in the Reserves Contract is adequate, as long as large capital projects (new and maintenance) plus operating projects are addressed site by site in the LTCCP. Commissioning new tracks will raise the cost of track maintenance in the contracts.

6. Benefits Walkways Bring

6.1 The presumption that physical activity in outdoor settings is good, lies beneath the notion of tracks bringing benefits to people. Tracks provide opportunities for active living. In effect they are venues that provide a setting for a small but significant range of outdoor recreation activities. Participating in these activities generates benefits to individuals, families, communities and the nation. Tracks also have a more basic transportation function of providing access, links and short cuts, although these are considered secondary for the purposes of the tracks covered by this document. Submissions from 1998 indicated that residents require tracks for the informal recreation opportunities they offer. Some tracks offer relief from the stresses of modern living, traffic and working conditions. Tracks can provide people with a peaceful, natural environment, free from commercial activity and competitive pressure. A summarised list of benefits identified in this review follows:

- Active living helps people to live longer. Tracks provide for active lifestyles and contribute to healthy communities - reducing stress, depression and contributing to emotional and psychological well being.
- Provision of outdoor recreation opportunities, including tracks, helps humans to retain a bond with nature, which some would argue, is in our self-interest because our mental, physical and spiritual health depends upon it. Louv, pg 3.
- Participating in outdoor recreation and active living is critical to enhancing most people's quality of life. It fosters personal development, growth of self esteem and develops a positive self image. Tracks offer outdoor recreation opportunities. Unfortunately SPARC's 2007 findings seem to indicate that young New Zealanders are not well connected with the outdoors. With vast "natural" areas, Hutt City Council is in a position to challenge this trend at a local level.
- Tracks provide learning and socialisation opportunities for individuals, families and communities. They encourage people to develop an appreciation for the environment in which they live and recreate. Users of tracks learn life skills.
- Family participation in active living is beneficial. Opportunities for young people to have outdoor recreation experiences with their families are extremely important in connecting young people with the outdoors. Tracks can be used to build strong families and develop skills.
- Good recreational assets enhance the community. They are civic assets and create a point of difference. A good system of tracks could be used as a catalyst to promote parts of our City to tourists.

6.2 Of course the statements mentioned above could equally be applied to other recreation activities. It is important to note that good tracks in this City already exist and have potential for further development. The network is already in place and functioning. It is a network which can be enhanced to offer more benefit.

- 6.3 Tracks provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, without direct charges. Many neighbourhoods can access existing tracks without having to use transport. Tracks can reduce the need for some short suburban car trips.
- 6.4 The effects of sedentary lifestyles are being addressed at a national level, for example SPARC's Push Play campaign. American research estimates that "sedentary living is responsible for about one-third of deaths due to coronary heart disease, colon cancer and diabetes – three diseases for which physical activity is an established causal factor", Powell et al. Powell predicts that the greatest benefits would accrue by encouraging those that report no leisure-time physical activity to do some and to encourage those who are irregularly active to participate in at least 30 minutes of light activity five days per week. These potential walkways users require facilities to match their ability plus opportunities for additional challenge and skill development. Eventually experienced, fit users will need to seek out other sites for greater challenges.
- 6.5 Tracks can link parks and extend the perceived size and remoteness of parks without requiring large amounts of extra land to be obtained. This concept was supported by several submitters to the 2008 Draft "Making Tracks".

7. Definitions

- 7.1 This document examines “tracks” in the broadest sense. This document acknowledges the tracks contained in Appendix A as those Council is responsible for inspecting, maintaining and managing.
- 7.2 “Tracks” is a term officers have used to cover the following facilities: a variety of tracks, walkways, routes, (including stream beds and ridges), paths, trails, firebreaks and unformed roads. These can be located in urban or rural settings. The walkways may be in bush areas, near waterways or coastline or across farmland.
- 7.3 Tracks in the proposed projects list mentioned in Appendix C of this Draft “making Tracks” plan may not necessarily located on land owned by Hutt City Council. The proposed projects are conceptual only and the routes have not been investigated in detail at this time. In some cases proceeding with projects would rely on voluntary cooperation from willing landowners. At this time Hutt City Council only endorses the use of walkways illustrated in Appendix A of this document.
- 7.4 Track users and track standards referred to in this document correspond to the descriptions set out in SNZ HB 8630:2004. A summary is provided as Appendix D. It is proposed that a simple 4 category system, based on the SNZ Handbook would adequately meet the needs of Council. Greater Wellington are now using this simplified hierarchy of categories. In summary;

Path

Walking Track (combines Short Walk/Walking Track categories)

Tramping Track (combines Easy Tramping Track/Tramping Track categories)

Route

8. Recent Changes

- 8.1 A number of changes in Council and in the parks industry have altered the track scene. By far the bulk of these are good news. One of the positive changes is that the 1998 document proved to be a very helpful management and policy tool for guiding decision making.
- 8.2 The most serious track matters presented to Council in 1998 have been eliminated or mitigated between 1989 and 2007, with the exception of illegal motorised vehicle use on the firebreaks. Some submitters to the 2008/09 Draft "Making Tracks" commented on this problem and expressed dissatisfaction with the current situation.
- 8.3 The transfer of tracks in the East Harbour Regional Park to Greater Wellington, the Regional Council. This move indicates that a good level of local and regional government coordination exists in the local outdoor recreation scene. This may not be typical of outdoor recreation provision across New Zealand.
- 8.4 In 2004, Standards New Zealand and the Department of Conservation coordinated the production of a new document to guide track construction. Since 2005, The New Zealand Handbook Tracks and Visitor Structures SNZ HB 8630:2004 has been used by Council to provide consistent standards for new construction and upgrading of tracks. Local contractors have quickly embraced the purpose and practicalities of the Handbook.
- 8.5 "Large parts of our community are not sufficiently active to maintain basic good health and nearly three quarters of New Zealanders want to increase their overall participation in outdoor recreation," SPARC, 2007. Since the 1998 Walkway Review there has been a focus at national level to reverse the trend towards sedentary lifestyles and obesity in favour of physically active lifestyles. SPARC's "Push Play" is an example of this. Council's track network contributes to the range of facilities available to people seeking interesting, attractive, low cost physical activity opportunities locally.
- 8.6 A review of the Parks and Gardens Division in 2006/07 has created more opportunity for the Reserves Asset Manager to concentrate on managing assets and going out on site.

9. 2008 Issues

- 9.1 Since the 1998 Track Review was published a number of developments at Council and in the Parks Industry have slightly altered the thinking behind track provision. Nationally the most significant of these is the publication of the New Zealand Standard. Locally significant is the gap between the standard of existing tracks and the needs and expectations of track users.

Users – Who are they? How many?

- 9.2 The number of walkers and cyclists using Council's track network is unknown. There is no quantitative information about local track use available. Although officers have a feel for kind of use being made of the City's track network, the level of tracks use and user satisfaction is unknown. Knowledge about users and popularity of tracks would give officers additional information when prioritising maintenance and upgrading. Mobile track counters have been purchased and quantitative information about track use will be recorded.

Matching Tracks with the Likely Users

- 9.3 It is clear that some guide to the hierarchy of track provision would be useful to officers trying to match track users with construction and maintenance specifications. The approach recommended by Standards New Zealand in SNZ HB 8630:2004 requires likely users to be identified. The approximate requirements of users is then matched to specifications which can be used to guide the development of new tracks or upgrades of existing tracks. This concept is sound, however consultation revealed that the community has various levels of understanding about the Handbook and who likely users will and should be.
- 9.4 Tracks located in the urban and suburban area will generally be easier and of a higher standard than those in peri-urban areas. Within urban and suburban areas the "Path and Walking Track" standards should be predominant. Terrain and the presence of existing tracks result in a smaller number of "Tramping Tracks". Although suburban tracks offer a level of wilderness experience, their locations and lengths imply that they ought to cater for a wide range of abilities. These urban tracks are likely to be the first lightweight bush walking experiences for many children. For some it may be as adventurous and remote as their wilderness experience will *ever* get. Inexperienced track users require easy tracks to build fitness, *skills* and confidence on. If Council wishes to promote recreational walking, entry level tracks in the suburbs are important. Greater Wellington and the Department of Conservation locally cater for more adventurous walkers and cyclists. In marketing terms, Hutt City Council should aim to appeal to a slightly different market.

- 9.5 Within the track network it is essential to offer a range of experiences. Fortunately the terrain and landscape in this City allow Council to offer the full range of difficulty (path to route). Given the urban and peri-urban nature setting of Council's tracks. Excluding the 6 specialist mountain bike tracks at the Wainuiomata Mountain Bike Facility, 42% of Council's tracks suit less able users. Officers suggest that this figure should be around 66%. This could be achieved by:
- a) constructing new Paths, Short Walks or Walking Tracks; or
 - b) upgrading existing Easy Tramping Tracks, Tramping Tracks and Routes to comply with Path, Short Walk or Walking Track requirements; or
 - c) a combination of a) and b).
- 9.6 It is necessary to rely on people's common sense to select tracks that are appropriate for their ability. Clearly young children are an exception and require supervision. It is Council's responsibility to provide basic advice about the track. It is impossible to make tracks absolutely safe for users. The tracks are unsupervised outdoor facilities services at a low level. The experiences they offer sit under the category of outdoor recreation. The very fact that they exist in the "natural" environment introduces risk. It is also what makes them popular assets. To take all the risk away would also remove the pleasure and challenge of using them.
- 9.7 As a land manager and land owner, frequent off-track activity in natural areas is undesirable for Council. Off-track activity spreads the negative environmental effects of human activity wider than a limited track corridor. Effects include soil compaction, weed seed spread, erosion and vegetation damage. In addition to this unofficial tracks are gradually created, which are not managed by Council. Officers are concerned about unofficial tracks extending onto private property over time. Council does not police track use and is practically limited in its ability to manage off-track use of its land. On the other hand, some infrequent, low-key off-track recreational activity in natural areas is unlikely to cause harm eg botanising and walking up stream beds. The risk of getting lost and coming to harm in suburban areas is likely to be low. While Council does not encourage off-track use of natural areas, it does not normally manage it either.

Quality of Tracks, Existing and Proposed

- 9.8 The nature and quality of Council's tracks currently varies greatly. This offers users a range of experiences. However, it is generally accepted in the Parks industry that most tracks in the urban to peri-urban area should be relatively easy, with longer, more challenging tracks located in more remote areas. Recently, Council track development and upgrade work has complied with the Standards New Zealand Handbook for Tracks and Visitor Structures. Many tracks managed by Council do not comply with the Handbook, although in time, officers believe that the majority could. Clearly this raises the issue of cost because it is usually more expensive to comply with the Handbook. There is a gap between the standard of tracks Council

provides and the standard we should provide, assuming Council adopts SNZ HB 8630:2004. This can be addressed over time. Compliance with SNZ HB 8630:2004 is voluntary. Council can opt to make exceptions on a case by case basis. Appendix B contains a summary of 2007/08 track assessments and Appendix C sets out the funding option Council approved on 22 April 2009.

Maintenance

- 9.9 The level of maintenance chosen for tracks will have an influence on user experience and on the funds required to manage the tracks in order to satisfy user demand.
- 9.10 Day to day track maintenance and inspection of Council's track network is carried out by Council's contractor, Downer Works EDI, previously Excell Corporation. The Parks and Gardens Division of Council is considered to be the property manager. It responds to requests for service from the public and attends to major maintenance work.
- 9.11 Consultation confirms that the public generally agree that providing a range of maintenance levels would assist in providing a range of experiences on the walkways.
- 9.12 It is clear that all walkways maintenance should be carried out at a level that keeps the walkway functioning for users while making minimal impact on the surrounding terrain and vegetation, (with the exception of reducing weed species). This would keep the City's walkways looking more 'natural', creating character and appeal. Clearly different styles and grades of track suit some terrain and landscapes better. The level of maintenance chosen for tracks will have an influence on user experience and on the funds required to manage the tracks in order to satisfy user demand.
- 9.13 One danger of an inadequate inspection and maintenance regime is that frustrated walkers cut tracks and carry out maintenance works themselves.

Shared Use of Tracks – Walkers and Mountain Bikers

- 9.14 Council assumes that mountain biking will continue to expand and Council wants to support this. Cyclists will continue to seek riding opportunities on public open space. A cooperative effort between mountain bikers, other user groups and Council appears to be the most effective approach. Recently mountain bikers have worked alongside Council officers to expand their riding opportunities, namely development of the mountain bike facility in Waiu Street, Wainuiomata. The local mountain biking community has provided a well coordinated and abundant source of enthusiastic volunteers to resource the development of several trails at Waiu Street. Mountain bikers are currently working on a conceptual proposal to establish a walking a medium grade, quality walking and cycling route between Te Whiti Park and the ECNZ Road. This is being referred to as "Te Whiti Riser" for now.
- 9.15 It is clear that there is a demand for the Hutt City Council to provide for mountain biking. By creating quality, interesting "feeder" tracks, mountain bikers could be

encouraged to make even more use of the firebreaks. “Long live long riders” is an expression used by mountain bikers. Supporting the development of bike-able tracks, which can be combined to form long circuits, will promote this. One idea is to link the north end of the ECNZ Road to the Blue Mountains or Pine Haven area, Upper Hutt. Another is to open a mountain bike route between Moores Valley and Whitemans Valley. Both require cooperation with Upper Hutt City Council.

- 9.16 In Hutt City there is general acceptance that most tracks are suitable to be shared by foot traffic and mountain bike traffic. Feedback to officers indicates that the public accepts the tracks will be shared by bicycles and walkers. On a few tracks horses are also part of the user mix; these are on the ECNZ ridge track astern Hills and the Upper Fitzherbert Road Track. The track network is not available for motorised recreational use at all. However, four wheel drive vehicles, trail bikes and quad bikes remain problematic on some tracks, particularly the Hutt River Trail area and the Wainuiomata/Eastern Hills Firebreaks.
- 9.17 Since 2006 Council has actively supported the development of mountain biking opportunities. The facility at Waiu Street will continue to be the hub for this activity, and mountain biking opportunities are likely to radiate from this area and extend north along other areas of the Wainuiomata and Eastern Hutt Valley Hills. Wellington, Rotorua and Christchurch lead the country in terms of provision for mountain biking. It realistic to predict that Hutt City will be amongst these leaders in the next 10 years if Council continues its current level of support.
- 9.18 Mountain bike volunteers and Council officers have produced a concept plan to guide the development of the Waiu Street site. It emphasises provision for novice to intermediate level riders as there appears to be a regional deficit for this level of riding. The difficulty with this is that many of the volunteers ride at an intermediate to expert level and would prefer to direct their volunteer efforts towards developing tracks they will enjoy riding. To date officers and volunteers have been able to manage this quandary by engaging contractors to develop the new novice tracks.
- 9.19 As the scope for new track development shrinks, the expectation is for mountain bike volunteers to spend more time on track maintenance at Waiu Street. Although untested, this may prove to be unappealing to mountain bike volunteers and a component of development may address this.
- 9.20 There are few reasons to exclude mountain bikers from tracks. Steps, structures and steep gradients are the main impediments to mountain bikers. These obstacles need to be minimised in order to provide good riding opportunities. On the other hand, including some of these items is a way to manage (deter) mountain bike use.
- 9.21 Officers note that it may be necessary to provide a mix of single and dual use tracks in the City. Some tracks could be designated as walking only and others could be cycling only. Many can cope with both uses. Research information from the office of the Minister of Conservation indicates that mountain biking does not generally cause grater damage than other activities. Generally speaking, well constructed tracks with gradients of less than 20 degrees can handle mounting bike use with little extra

maintenance. Sometimes it is prudent to exclude users from tracks in order to enhance experience or safety. Beeline, Wainuiomata Mountain Bike Facility, is an example. Consultation reveals that a few walkers perceive there is a problem with mountain bikers creating dangerous situations and damaging tracks. The issue between mountain bike use and walkers' dissatisfaction is minor in this City and officers believe that sub-standard track construction is generally the underlying problem for the poor condition of tracks, not mountain biker use.

- 9.22 The life of a track could be lengthened by ensuring that the design and construction is carried out with long term use in mind. Tracks running down ridges are generally incapable of sustaining long term mountain bike use. Soils that are predominantly clay cope poorly with long term mountain bike use unless an artificial surface can be incorporated into the track. The normal solution to this is to provide a well graded and well drained compacted base course, overlaid with a compacted top course of smaller grade gravel.

Firebreak Use - Motorised Vehicles and Non Motorised Activities

- 9.23 Recreational use of motorised vehicles on the tracks, including fire breaks and the ECNZ Road, is inappropriate. This assumption was been unanimously supported by elected members in the 1998 Walkways Review consultation process. From time to time organisations leasing communications sites on the ridges are given permission to use the firebreaks. Vehicles carrying out maintenance and inspection of the firebreaks also use them on a regular basis.
- 9.24 Council is responsible for maintaining all the firebreaks on Council land. The main ridge track between Stokes Valley and the Wainuiomata Hill, the ECNZ Track is managed by Council but maintenance is shared between Hutt City Council, Transpower and BCL. Transpower require access to maintain the electricity lines and pylons located near the main ridge. BCL have communication towers on the ridge.
- 9.25 Unauthorised vehicle access on to tracks is an ongoing problem around the City. Trail bikes and Four Wheel Drive Vehicles are a nuisance on the tracks, especially the fire breaks. They pose a threat to the safety of horse riders, runners, walkers and mountain bikers. Fatalities have occurred as a result of illegal trail bike use of the fire breaks. Trail bikes have the potential to ignite fires if they are not fitted with spark arresters. Trial bikes and Four Wheel Drive Vehicles cause significant degradation of track surface, especially in winter.

- 9.26 Although officers have installed gates across street entrances to firebreaks, and other walkways, motorised vehicles continue to gain access by cutting through private land or forcing a way through existing barriers. Areas that are most problematic include:
- the Konini firebreak, above Parkway College, Wainuiomata;
 - both riverbanks of the Hutt River, north of the Melling Bridge, (managed by GW);
 - the Summit Road firebreak, Fairfield; and
- 9.27 The gates and barriers are inspected monthly and appropriate repairs are made as necessary. In addition to this officers respond to reports from members of the public. Signs outlining Council's policy are erected at firebreak entrances but are frequently tampered with.
- 9.28 Clearly the cost of repairing gates and barriers will be ongoing until the local culture of recreational off-roading alters.

Land Acquisition to Enhance Track Network

- 9.29 In line with the 1998 Review, officers continue to see the benefits of taking a strategic approach to managing and developing the City's track network. Land should be acquired strategically to enhance the existing network of walkways.
- 9.30 Consultation indicates that there is public concern that walkways are being lost and consumed in subdivision activity. People are annoyed that walkways and their access points have been lost in the subdivision process. One example is the Park Road Reservoir to Fawcett Place link in Belmont. This track is not located on public land and is not managed by Council although the public treated the track as if it were part of Council's track network. Subdivision has interfered with the southern entry to this track and officers are currently arranging an alternative route on Council land.
- 9.31 As the theme of active transport options gains more profile the tendency will be for pedestrian traffic to be viewed alongside vehicle traffic in subdivision planning and development. It is essential for pedestrian activity in communities to be considered as an important part of developments. Good pedestrian and cycle access makes it easier to access public transport, especially trains, and lowers road congestion.
- 9.32 Council's Reserve Land Acquisition/Disposal Policy, adopted in 2003, guides decisions around land acquisition. The policy allows land to be acquired or purchased to extend the track network although funding may be a constraint.

Establishing Access Over Private Land

- 9.33 A number of tracks in the City have historically been used by the public for walking and cycling despite them being on privately owned land. From time to time Council receives complaints from track users who have discovered that access to a known track, (assumed by users to be public land) has been severed or signposted as privately owned.
- 9.34 Council should attempt to negotiate and formalise public access on some key privately owned tracks. Negotiating and formalising public access across private land with willing landowners would bring significant benefits to the walkways in the City. These benefits include:
- Providing Council and landowners with the ability to make access rights clear;
 - Could allow links to be realigned or replaced where they have been lost in the subdivision process;
 - Broadens the scope for creating a coordinated walkways system in the City;
 - Opens up opportunities to develop good links;
 - Gives Council more scope to provide walkways without having to purchase additional land;
 - Ensures that walkways are on a regular inspection list and receive the required maintenance.
- 9.35 Council currently makes an annual payment to the owner of Orongorongo Station to allow the public to access the Wainuiomata Coast entrance to the Turakirae Head seal colony. Generous landowners in Korokoro also the public to cross their property to gain access to Puketiro/Maori Point. These special arrangements could appeal to other landowners.
- 9.36 Public access across private land can be gained in several ways. Council could look at buying the land to link existing tracks. Alternatively Council could nominate areas of land it wishes to acquire when land comes up for subdivision. This would be done through the District Plan process. The New Zealand Walkways Act 1990 may also provide some scope for Council to establish access.
- 9.37 Council could also look at swapping land with neighbours or leasing walkway areas. All of these options will have financial implications for Council. It is possible that Council could negotiate access with landowners at little cost to Council and no cost to landowners by setting up lease arrangements.
- 9.38 Developing good relationships with land owners that allow public access will be critical to formalising the existing range of walkways and developing additional walkways and links. Landowners will need to be convinced that it is beneficial to them to have arrangements formalised.

Links and Urban Networks

- 9.39 Many tracks in the City are used as links between streets, public open spaces and schools and between suburbs. These tracks are well used because they “go somewhere”. In some cases the walkways are simply used as a short cut in other cases they offer a more interesting experience than a footpath leading to the same destination. Loops and links are far more desirable than tracks that have to be “back tracked”.
- 9.40 Tracks are used as recreational assets for activities such as walking, dog walking, running, orienteering, Rogaining, cycling and pony riding.
- 9.41 Unfortunately there are several walkways that have poor links. In some cases the links once existed but have now been lost. The reason for this loss is often related to the development of subdivisions in new residential areas. Land that was historically used for walking by the public was actually owned privately and later sold. In some cases development has meant the historical access to walkways has been lost. Such is the case concerning the historic Mangaroa Bridle Track access from Horoeoka Street, Stokes Valley. Over time it may be possible to regain some sections of these tracks by purchasing land or acquiring land through the subdivision process.
- 9.42 The need to expand the existing network of walkways can be addressed in several ways. They are:
- The subdivision process when working out Reserve contributions;
 - Development within existing reserves, in times of upgrades or alterations;
 - Land purchases by Council for environmental or recreational purposes.
- 9.43 When planning links it is vital that the links to tracks are publicly owned wherever possible. Efforts should be made to make road crossings associated with tracks safe, with consideration to the likely users of walkways.

Track Closures

- 9.44 Track closures were a high profile issue in the 1998 Walkways Review. As a result of that review, 5 tracks were closed. Officers are unaware of the need to consider any track closures as part of the 2008/09 review process. As poor tracks or sections of tracks are re-routed, it may be prudent to close tracks.

Track Promotion

- 9.45 Some communities promote their local tracks. In one case this has been problematic because some of the tracks proposed for promotion were not maintained or inspected by Council, therefore officers believed it would inappropriate to promote them. Controlling promotion of tracks on Council’s land, but outside the managed track network, has been challenging on occasions.

Track Information

- 9.46 Existing information about Hutt City Council tracks has improved massively since 1998, when Council increased the funding available for tracks. Directional signage on streets and on the tracks has improved the public's ability to navigate the track network out of sight. Retaining directional signage on the firebreaks continues to challenge officers.
- 9.47 There remains an opportunity to provide more information about the tracks on interpretation signs. For example, the interesting ecology or history of a site could be displayed on signage along the track or at entrances.
- 9.48 Signage illustrating the overall layout of areas where several tracks link would improve sites like Jubilee Park, Hayward Scenic Reserve and Percy Scenic Reserve.

Track Brochure

- 9.49 The citywide "Track and Trail" brochure developed following the 1998 track review provides brief information about the tracks. There have been several editions of this brochure and it is the most popular brochure at the Hutt City Visitor Information Centre. One submitter suggested that Council provide simple black and white sheets of information (including map) about tracks in specific areas. This would be useful for areas where tracks are clustered, such as Williams Park, Hayward Scenic Reserve, Jubilee Park and Percy Scenic Reserve.

Regional Provision

- 9.50 The Council is just one provider of tracks in the City. DoC and Greater Wellington the Regional Council provide and maintain far more kilometres of tracks in the City. These agencies attract track users from across the Wellington Region and generally cater for people seeking more remote and challenging experiences that those offered by the Hutt City Council. Upper Hutt City Council and Wellington City Council, also provide tracks. When new specialised track facilities are being considered Hutt City should aim to compliment the range of tracks and experiences offered across the region. It is important that Hutt City considers track provision in a regional context as well as a local one, particularly in the southern 4 cities of the Region. This approach to consider tracks in their regional context is new for this Council and is in line with the Open Space concepts set out in the Wellington Regional Strategy, June 2007. The regional context is particularly relevant to specialised sites like the Wainuiomata Mountain Bike Facility. Regional benefits may come in to play when considering proposals to develop longer mountain bike rides linking Upper and Lower Hutt along the Eastern Hills, for example a mountain bike connection between Whitemans Valley and Moores Valley.

Transfer of Management from Hutt City to Greater Wellington

- 9.51 Since the 1998 Walkways Review, Hutt City Council agreed to transfer the management of many properties in the Wainuiomata and Eastern Bays areas to

Greater Wellington to allow the northern are of the East Harbour Regional Park to be commissioned. As a result of management being transferred, many tracks have also been transferred from Hutt City to Greater Wellington. Greater Wellington has upgraded many of the tracks and the standard of promotion, interpretation and maintenance is superior to what was previously provided by this Council.

Volunteer Construction and Maintenance on Tracks

- 9.52 Volunteer groups and work schemes have made a significant contribution to the City's tracks. In some cases this contribution has produced poor quality, non-complying tracks, which cannot be maintained easily or affordably. Council is resourced to assist volunteers wanting to work on track projects. Volunteers bring a number of special benefits to projects. Opportunities for volunteers and Council to work together can become a reality so long as the projects are well briefed, well supervised and fit with Council strategy.
- 9.53 That Council supports volunteer groups wanting to carry out work on the tracks, where it is certain that the location and quality of the tracks produced will match Council's requirements. Mostly Council will oversee and lead projects. At other times this role is taken on by volunteer groups. The nature of the work could include, planning, physical development, monitoring, guiding, promotion and ranger-type services.
- 9.54 It is vital that volunteer track work is coordinated by Council. This will reduce that number of incidents where individual volunteers are opening up tracks in bush areas. This work is being carried out in good faith by enthusiastic volunteers but does not necessarily fit in with the strategic development of walkways in the City. Work should be carried out under Council supervision to a specification set by Council.
- 9.55 With the right supervision and guidance, volunteers can give special attention to track condition and construction. Secondly, volunteers would gain a sense of belonging to their community as a result of contributing. People interested in tracks would be encouraged to participate in community activities. A concept of "community ownership", centred on walkways, would be fostered.

Hutt River Trail

- 9.56 Development of the Hutt River Trail is a long-term volunteer project being carried out by the Combined Hutt Valley Rotary Clubs in conjunction with the Wellington Regional Council. The project has been taken on by the Rotary Clubs (in a volunteer capacity) to enhance the river as a prime activity area for the City. Rotary's overall interest is to promote the River and its environs as a major asset of the City, to enhance its aesthetic appeal, and develop it as an activity area for citizens of the region". The Hutt River Trail has become a city attraction.

- 9.57 The Hutt River trail is a very popular walking and cycling area. The Eastern and Western banks provide a walking and cycling trail from Kaitoke to Wellington Harbour.
- 9.58 The Wellington Regional Council controls activity on the Hutt River banks and they coordinate work in the Hutt River trail. The bulk of funding for volunteer work on the Hutt River Trail has come from the Wellington Regional Council. The Upper Hutt City Council and Hutt City Council commit funding annually. Greater Wellington employs a ranger to manage the Trail.

Great Harbour Way

- 9.59 Currently this project is being led by volunteers. Rotary is involved, and the project focuses on the concept of developing a walking and cycling trail from Wellington's South Coast, around the Harbour to Fitzroy Bay. The project is in the early planning stage at the moment.

Upgrading required to address track deterioration

- 9.60 It is apparent that some sections of several tracks are deteriorating. Deterioration can be attributed to several factors. The most common appears to be poor alignment and inadequate drainage. The result is the transformation of tracks into temporary streams or the development of boggy patches. The solutions include re-routing walkways, installing drainage and filling in ditches and building timber boardwalks or staircases. Small quantities of upgrading can be funded from the operating budget for reserves. Large projects, say upgrading an entire track, will normally require funding through the Annual Plan process. In the future officers are likely to recommend that the contractor responsible for track inspection and maintenance be required to address more aspects of minor maintenance as part of the contract in order to prevent lack of minor maintenance quickly causing deterioration, requiring major maintenance (or worse). This will be considered when Council's contract for reserves maintenance is next tendered.

10. Funding Tracks

- 10.1 Prior to 1998 the budget for track work, outside that provided in the Reserves Contract, was \$5000 including gst. An outcome of the 1998 Review was an increase to \$15,000. Council has increased its commitment to tracks and in 2009 the expenditure budget sits at:
- \$25,000 in Operations budget (ongoing)
 - \$30,000 in Maintenance Projects
 - \$30,000 in Operating Projects (walkways and pests plants)
 - \$125,000 in Capital Projects (Wainuiomata Mountain Bike Facility, Stage 2)
 - \$34,000 contracted inspection and track maintenance (ongoing)
- 10.2 In addition to this, Council contributes annually to the development and maintenance of the Hutt River Trail. In 2008 this figure is \$11,000 including gst.
- 10.3 Funding will be subject to the scrutiny of the Annual Plan and LTCCP process. On 22 April 2009 Council resolved to support the projects listed as Project Priorities, attached as Appendix 2. The following items may be considered (along with others) for funding at officer level:
- Percy Scenic Reserve Dam to Waterfall – top priority
 - Wainuiomata Mountain Bike Facility Stage 3
 - Developing new easy track between Maungaraki shops and George Gee Drive
 - Taita Cemetery to ridge between Naenae and Stokes Valley Road
 - Stokes Valley Road, up to ridge above Taita Cemetery
 - Upgrade track in Harry Todd Reserve, Wainuiomata
 - Jointly develop track with volunteers between Te Whiti Park and ECNZ Road
 - Establish legal route for public (primarily mountain bikers) from north end ECNZ Road into Upper Hutt (blue Mountains area) jointly with Upper Hutt City
- 10.4 Downer EDI Works, (previously Excell Corporation), carry out regular inspections and maintenance on the walkways. The bulk of this work is contained in the Reserves Contract for the Parks and Gardens Division of the Hutt City Council, however some work sits in the Horticultural contract and small sections are excluded from contracts. Currently the value of the contracted track services in the Reserves Contract is \$34,000 plus gst annually. The Reserves Contract expires in September 2010. As new tracks are developed this figure will rise in order to cover the cost of maintaining new developments.

Facts

- Approximately 64 km of tracks are being used as if they are public walkways. This includes 33 km of firebreaks and vehicle tracks. Breaking tracks down by SNZ classification and lengths, the distribution of difficulty is:

Path	4.4km
Short Walk	2km
Walking Track	4.8km
Easy Tramping Track	16.5km
Tramping Track	35.7km
Route	.93km

- Council manages 69 individual tracks, (although some of these are broken into sections for mapping purposes). Breaking down individual tracks by SNZ classification, the distribution of difficulty is:

Path	5 tracks	8%
Short Walk	6 tracks	10%
Walking Track	16 tracks	25%
Easy Tramping Track	9 tracks	14%
Tramping Track	25 tracks	40%
Route	2 tracks	3%

This breakdown includes 63 individual tracks but excludes the 6 tracks managed primarily for mountain biking and graded under the International Mountain Bikes Association system.

- The Wellington Regional Council is responsible for maintaining the Hutt River Trail and all tracks in Belmont Regional Park and East Harbour Regional Park. The Department of Conservation manage tracks in Rimukata Forest Park.
- Maintaining a walkway or track generally involves checking and correcting the water tables, weedeating, pruning vegetation, repairing structures such as board walks and wooden steps and adding top course to the walking surface. This cost will alter as new tracks are developed, and if older tracks are abandoned.
- Currently all tracks are inspected quarterly. This is followed by maintenance. However officers believe that a prudent approach would be to vary the inspections according to the standard of tracks and levels of use. For example, the path between Petone Wharf and Korokoro Gateway could benefit from monthly inspections, while the route from

Tawhai Street to the ECNZ Road could be done 6 monthly or annually. Checks include weed control, checking signs and checking the water tables.

- Previously the most economic way to cart base and top course to isolated tracks was by helicopter. Generally speaking this is no longer true. Contractors with small trucks and mechanical wheelbarrows are offering efficiencies, where access allows. A long term advantage is created when tracks are upgraded using a limited number of steps and 800mm width. This allows a mechanical barrow to be used for maintenance, particularly with surfacing work.

10.5 Council has adopted a list of priority track projects and it is essential that the programme for maintenance, upgrade and development is prepared with accuracy and then managed prudently. If this does not happen, current levels of funding will be inadequate to maintain and development the track network. It will gradually fall into a pattern of deterioration again.

11. Summary

11.1 We're sitting on a fantastic asset!

11.1.1 The walkways in Hutt City are an asset other cities envy. We are especially fortunate to have tracks servicing so many residential areas. Even in the CDB it is practical to walk to bush tracks in Jubilee Park or along the Hutt River in a lunch hour. A quote from one submission in 1998 stated "Eat your hearts out, Auckland and Wellington!" Council should consider the recommendations made in this review carefully. Just like other civic facilities such as swimming pools, museums, sports grounds and libraries, tracks can bring great benefits to residents and visitors. Council's reputation as a track provider is improving. This document sets out ideas that will allow further strategic development of the track assets in order to benefit residents and visitors.

12. Existing Documents

12.1 In the interest of developing a strategic document for asset of assets, which many agencies have an interest in, the following documents have been considered.

Creating a Healthy State for Outdoor Recreation in New Zealand, 2007

12.2 SPARC undertook a review of the outdoor recreation sector in New Zealand with a view to developing a national strategy for the sector. This document provides a summary of the initial findings. SPARC's review specifically considers local government provision of outdoor recreation and discusses collaboration, assignment of roles and requirements for research. This project is still "live".

At the Heart – Regional Physical Activity Strategy, 2007

12.3 Algate Enterprises prepared this document, which represents a number of agencies involved in physical activity across Wellington Region. The Hutt City Council was a contributing organisation. At the Heart emphasises the benefits generated by physical activity and considers walking. It focuses on getting more people physically active. Most track use in our City would fall into the category of "discretionary physical activity" in this document. Provision of tracks for recreational and health purposes is in line with the strategies contained in At the Heart. There is emphasis on:

- Providing for communities that tend to be more deprived of recreational opportunities
- Collaborative planning between Council's in terms of facilities, activities and open space
- Accessibility of facilities
- Improving perception of safety around public spaces
- Accommodating cultural diversity
- Facilitating communities to be more self-determined and self-reliant
- Promoting physical activity by quality programming
- Reorienting services and facilities to better meet physical activity needs of the population
- Improving monitoring, research and evaluation of recreation services and facilities

Wellington Regional Strategy, Internationally Competitive Wellington, 2007

12.4 The Regional Strategy states that "Quality Open Spaces are fundamental to world-class cities and regions" and recognises that tracks are important components of open

spaces. The overall approach of Making Tracks is consistent with the Draft vision of the Wellington Regional Open Space Working Group developed in 2009.

Regional Policy Statement, 1995

- 12.5 The Regional Policy Statement identifies a number of resource management issues within the region and sets that objectives, policies and methods to achieve the integrated management of natural and physical resources for the whole region. The Regional Policy Statement identifies the need to address public concerns about the loss of recreational opportunity and recognises that one of the most important aspects of landscapes is their capacity to provide recreational opportunities.

East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan, 2007

Belmont Regional Park Management Plan, 1996

- 12.6 The Regional Parks Network Management Plan, East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan and the Belmont Regional Park Management Plan guide the purpose, function and development of the two regional parks in Hutt City. The contents of the Management Plans are important considerations as both Councils are interested in working cooperatively in order to maximise benefits and avoid repetition.

Regional Cycling Plan, 2008

- 12.7 This document provides a framework to guide the development of cycling activities and network in the Wellington Region. It states that “Territorial Authorities have the most significant role in implementing the actions in this cycling plan”. The Plan supports the Great Harbour Way concept but provide little other information directly relevant to making Tracks.

Regional Walking Plan, 2008

- 12.8 The Regional Walking Plan responds to the Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy’s policy by setting out a series of initiatives intended to contribute to the regional outcomes for walking identified in the Regional Land Transport Strategy. The plan particularly focuses on interventions for walking as a mode of transport, for example trips to work places, educational facilities and public transport services. The plan was developed by the Regional Transport Committee.

LTCCP 2006 - 2017

- 12.9 Several Community Outcomes contained in Hutt City Council’s Long Term Council Community Plan relate to tracks in several. The Plan’s vision for Hutt City is “a great place to live, work and play”. In terms of Council’s role in track provision the key outcome is Community Outcome 5. Lifestyle, which refers to:

“affordable access to community facilities that include arts, cultural and recreation options”

“increased awareness of and participation in arts, cultural and recreational activities in the city”

- Provide a range of arts, cultural and recreational facilities throughout the city
- Reduce constraints and barriers to participation
- Locate HCC recreational facilities throughout the city

“improved access to a safe and enjoyable natural environment”

- Implement programmes and practices that improve public access and enjoyment of our parks and reserve, and regional parks, rivers and coastline
- Improve public feeling of safety when using our parks and reserves

12.10 One LTCCP item is to specifically provide for the development and maintenance of walkways. Another is to develop the Wainuiomata Mountain Bike facility and upgrade the Petone Foreshore.

12.11 Tracks may contribute to the Active Communities Project by increasing physical activity levels, and subsequent health benefits, of the resident community of the Hutt Valley. The Active Communities Project is a joint initiative involving Hutt City Council, Upper Hutt City Council, Sport and Recreation New Zealand, Sport Wellington Region and Regional Public Health.

12.12 Community Outcome 2, Connected covers:

“A local cycleway network that stimulates growth in recreational cycle use”

“Plan for an implement an improved cycle network”

12.13 Community Outcome 4, Healthy Environment covers:

“Provide public education on environmental initiatives”

“Develop policies and implement practices that enhance the environmental sustainability and natural diversity of our parks and reserves”

“Recognise and preserve the essential elements of the City’s landscape that give structure and contribute to its natural and cultural identity

Promote the protection of the natural environment”

Hutt City Council Active Recreation and Sport Strategy, 2007 – 2012

12.14 This document provides Council with guidance to assist in the allocation of resources in a coordinated, strategic, fair and focussed manner in order to increase

participation in active recreation and sport by Hutt City residents. Council's provision of tracks relates directly to Goals 3.

"GOAL 3 – Effective Open Space and Facilities – A network of open spaces and facilities across the city that enable and encourage participation in active recreation and sport".

"Objective – Accessibility

- Provide a range of locations for unstructured, casual recreation activities that need resident's varying time availability, fitness and equipment levels
- Educate and encourage active recreation and sport providers to create facilities that are inclusive, welcoming and beginner friendly for all ages"

"Objective – Active Environment, Dave Allan can we delete this objective reference??"

"Objective – Asset Management

- Provide well maintained facilities and open spaces through quality asset management practices"

Hutt City Council, Hutt City Cycle Strategy Implementation Plan, 2008

12.15 The main focus of this report is cycling for transportation purposes but there are some references to recreational cycling. Of these, the most significant (to Making Tracks) is a desire to incorporate or improve cycling opportunities in along the Hutt River Trail and Petone Foreshore (seaward of the road edge).

Hutt City Council Walking Strategy, 2006

12.16 This Strategic document has been prepared to advance the uptake of walking in Hutt City. It pays special attention to the promotion of walking in the context of recreational activity and transportation. The document encourages creation of more inclusive and attractive places that encourage walking. One objective is to "Increase the opportunity and ease of uptake of walking".

Hutt City Council Reserves Strategic Directions, 2003

12.17 This Strategy sets the direction for the City's provision of Open Space within a variety of landscapes and environmental settings, keeping in mind a wide range of purposes, for example recreation. The Strategy addresses the Council's priorities for the development and management of the City's open space network. It specifically mentions:

"Liaise with neighbouring councils to increase linear recreation opportunities, including the Regional Coastal Trail, Hutt River Trail, and access beyond the western and eastern hills."

"Provide high quality park facilities and services focusing on areas where there is greatest overall benefit for the city and its environment."

“Implement the findings of the Council’s Walkways Review” refers to the 1998 document.

“Work with other agencies to improve appropriate access to, and along, linear features such as the Hutt River, coastline, hill ridges and mountain ranges.”

“Western Hills: link existing bush gullies and provide walking access from the Hutt River to Belmont Regional Park. Develop access to the Western Hills open space to provide pedestrian and cycle recreation opportunities.”

“Continue to provide access opportunities to reserve generally to cater for aging and less mobile members of the community, including wheelchair and pushchair access.”

“Access reserve generally to establish which areas would be suitable for creating treed walkways for access by the less mobile members of the community.”

Matamata Piako District Council Draft Track Strategy, 2007

12.18 Used to compare local government approaches to track provision and policy development

Kerikeri/Paihia Community Board Track Strategy, 2005

12.19 Used to compare local government approaches to track provision and policy development.

Wellington City Council Open Spaces Access Plan, 2004

12.20 Used to compare local government approaches to track provision and policy development

13. Track Assessments

- 13.1 During 2007 and 2008 officers in the Parks and Gardens Division undertook a comprehensive inventory of tracks and track conditions. This work was limited to the tracks Council is responsible for maintaining. A summary of the information collected for the inventory is included on the site plans attached as Appendix B. Detailed information will be incorporated into the Tracks Section of the Parks and Gardens Asset Management Plan when it is next updated. More assessment work will occur in the future.
- 13.2 Besides providing an overall picture of track conditions in the City, the inventory provided an objective basis for assigning priorities to remedial work and upgrading, which are included in the Tracks Project Table. Without serious research, forecasting rates of deterioration would be unreliable. However, the key factors affecting track deterioration are: the quality of track construction, track slope, drainage, and substrate type.
- 13.3 Rainfall impacts significantly on track condition. On tracks, water is managed with water bars, side drains, cross drains, surfacing, sub-surfacing, benching, outwardly sloping surface. In general, when establishing new tracks or realigning existing tracks, the aim is to optimise drainage and reduce gradients. Woody roots in the substrate aid track stability but this needs to be balanced with the need to manage vegetation. Managing the width of the track surface is key.
- 13.4 In line with Greater Wellington's approach, officers believe it is appropriate for Council to adopt a simplified version of track categories, offering 4 categories, based on the specifications set out in the SNZ Handbook for Tracks and Visitor Structures.

14. References

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